



Monitoring and evaluation project:

## **Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers and Athena SWAN Mid-Career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant**

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This report presents data from 21 face-to-face interviews with awardees from two grant schemes established by the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity, namely, the Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers (RAC) and the Athena SWAN Mid-Career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant (ASCB). The sample of 21 persons represents 84% of the total population (25 grant awardees) in 2017 and 2018<sup>1</sup>.

Initially, the report introduces quantitative information on the awardees' profile: gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, employment conditions, age, language status, nationality, ethnicity, caring responsibilities, time of employment in NUI Galway, and college affiliation<sup>2</sup>.

Secondly, the report presents direct quotes from the interviews organized by the following themes: Grant appraisals; Application process; Grant use; and Comments on equality, diversity, and inclusion. The opinions of awardees are summarized at the beginning of each section.

Finally, the report draws Conclusions and offer Recommendations to enhance the grant schemes.

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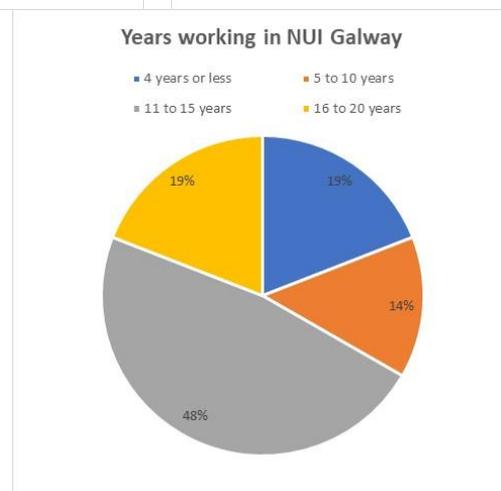
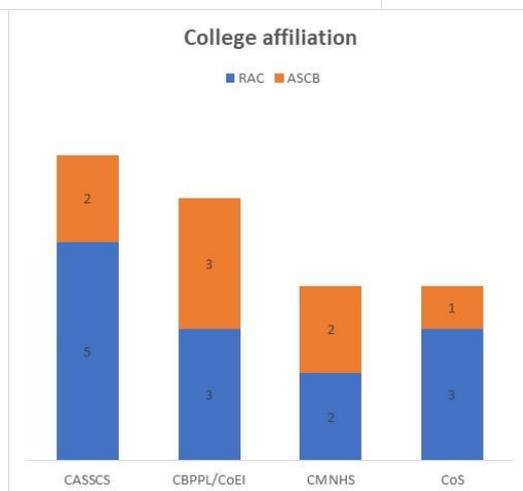
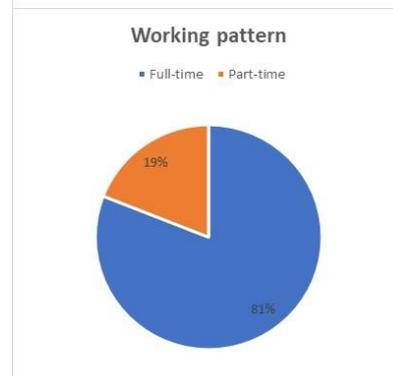
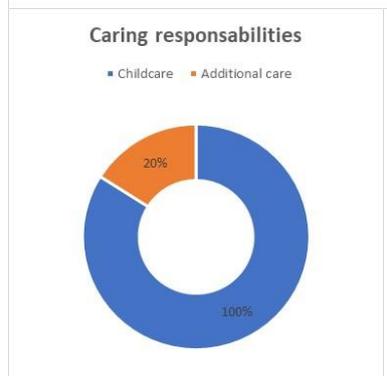
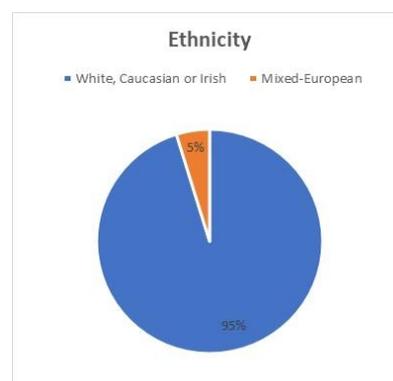
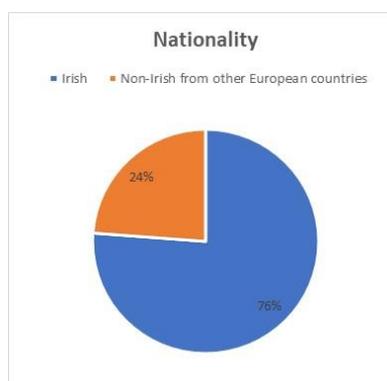
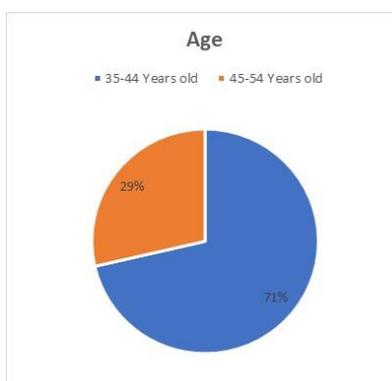
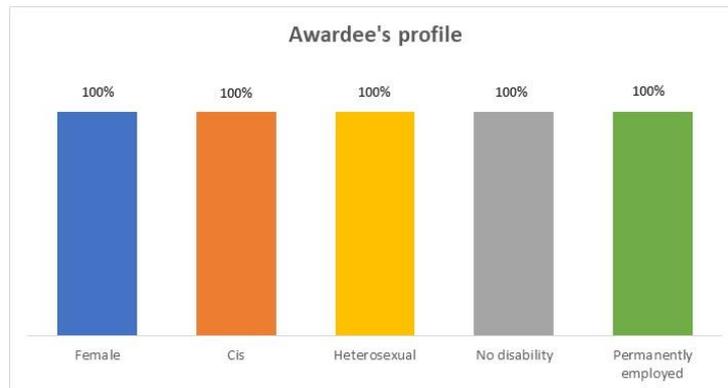
<sup>1</sup> The interviews were conducted between August 17<sup>th</sup> and October 26<sup>th</sup> 2018 in NUI Galway premises, except for one completed using video-call. The complete questionnaire is presented in Annex 1. The majority of the interviews lasted circa 20 minutes, ranging from 9 to 50 minutes. Participants authorized audio recording. Among the people who were not interviewed, one was on Sabbatical leave, two did not respond to the invitation to participate in the project and one interrupted the contact after the interview was scheduled.

<sup>2</sup> A significant number of interviewees explicitly required to conceal their school affiliation due to the reduced number of grant awardees in each school. Therefore, the report presents a broader affiliation, namely, the college. To guarantee anonymity for interviewees from the College of Engineering & Informatics (only two persons), their answers were merged with the ones from the College of Business, Public Policy, & Law. Personal information that could endanger anonymity was also omitted.

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# 1. Demographics



## 2. Grant appraisals

The Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers (RAC)<sup>3</sup> was rated positively by its awardees. It was described as an important step towards equality, and a recognition of disadvantages faced by lecturers returning from maternity leave. Many respondents stated they felt supported by the university. The flexibility and promptitude of the grant scheme were particularly praised. Many beneficiaries reported an increase in productivity and some also expressed a reduction in stress levels.

Awardees of the Athena SWAN Mid-Career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant (ASCB)<sup>4</sup> declared the grant is relevant and have positive outcomes. Most respondents valued the opportunity to plan their careers and to upskill. Lecturers interviewed stated the grant had resulted in more confidence and has had multiplier effects. The ASCB grant was considered relevant to mitigate former discrimination and rebuild trust in the system. But there was also a strong feeling that this was only a small step and much more needs to be done for those in mid-career who have been stalled by the legacy of inherent discrimination.

74% of all respondents considered the grant important or very important to their career goals.

100% declare they would recommend the grants to other colleagues.

81% rated highly (between 8 and 10 in a progressive 0 to 10 scale) the importance of the grants schemes to NUI Galway.

In terms of outputs, RAC resulted in 36 publications; 6 keynotes or invited talks; 14 events, and 17 other grant applications whilst ASCB supported 13 publications; 10 events, and 10 new grant applications.

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<sup>3</sup> All research active academic carers who have been out on long term carer leave (24 weeks or more) are entitled to apply for this grant. The value of the grant is up to €10,000. The award of the grant is based on evidence of research and scholarship activity prior to the leave taken – as evidenced on the applicants CV and the submission of a research plan (inclusive of budget) supported by the relevant Head of School and Dean of College. To date there has been 100% success rate for applicants.

<sup>4</sup> The Athena Swan Capacity Building Grant is aimed at Lecturers Above the Bar who have not has access to a returner grant for research active academic carers. It is valued at €5,000 and is competitive in that there are a limited number of these grants awarded each year. Number of grants distributed to colleges (to a maximum of 11 grants in total) is aligned with the proportion of women in the colleges; with initial focus mainly on the STEMM disciplines, as stated in the Athena Swan Action Plan (2018 – 2021). To date there has been 100% success rate for applicants.

Considering their career goals, respondents declared the research grant to be

<b>Response options</b>	<b>RAC</b>	<b>ASCB</b>	<b>Total</b>
Slightly important	1	1	3 (13%)
Moderately important	1	2	3 (13%)
Important	3	3	6 (27%)
Very important	8	2	10 (47%)

Respondents rated the grant scheme in terms of its importance to the university (0 being not important at all and 10 being very important)

<b>Progressive scale</b>	<b>RAC</b>	<b>ASCB</b>	<b>Total</b>
>5	0	0	0
5-7	1	3	3 (30%)
8-9	2	3	5 (24%)
10	8	2	12 (57%)

Grant recommendation

21 (100%) declared they would recommend the grant to other colleagues

Respondents listed academic outputs related to the grant

<b>Outputs</b>	<b>RAC</b>	<b>ASCB</b>	<b>Total</b>
Events			
Organization	6	0	6
Participation	2	3	5
Presentation	6	7	13
Keynote or invited talks	6	0	6
Total: Events	20	10	30
Publications			
Book chapter planned	1	0	1
Book planned	0	3	3
Article planned	17	8	25
Article published	18	2	20
Total: Publications	36	13	49
New grant applications	17	10	27

## 2.1 Quotes: Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers (RAC)

“For me, it was an overwhelmingly good experience. (...) I think it is a hugely valuable initiative.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y<sup>5</sup>)

“It is a good kind of springboard for coming back up.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“The grant is fantastic. It is good that the university recognizes that a woman returning or whoever is returning from this sort of leave has been at a disadvantage in terms of their research and they need the time to build it up again. Is it enough? No.” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“So I went on maternity leave and the thing is, when you go for promotion or for jobs or for anything like that or if you are looking to get another position within the university or whatever it is you go for interview and they look at your publications, but they are not going to take into account if you were on maternity leave. Well, to some extent, I am sure in our application for promotion it might ask you all right, but, in terms of metrics, in terms of workload and all of that, typically, the leave component is not taken into consideration (...) But this grant than recognizes that and that is how it is important for your career. Because it recognizes that you did have a gap away, that you can't be working when you have a newborn baby. So the grant recognizes that and it has just allowed me to catch up, really.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“I think this is an invaluable recognition of helping female to accelerate themselves into the workplace and having funding available to assist with that is very good, a very positive step. (...) I think it is a very valuable scheme and I think it is very welcome from the equality officer, very important for female academics.” (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

“I think both internally and externally it is important that they do have a grant scheme like this because I think it is hard to return, for lots of reasons. Whatever you are returning from, it is hard. (...) Externally, I think for people to see that there is such a scheme is also important. And it is possibly important for morale within the university because I don't think there is strong moral for that. Certainly, for gender equality, there is really not strong moral. Well, equality in general, there is not strong moral.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“I am very grateful for the grant. It is really good to see the Vice-President in this role as well. And somebody good leading all of this work. I am hoping it will lead to meaningful change. Most people are, you know, quite suspicious about it and don't really think that anything

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<sup>5</sup> Quotes are identified by Interview number (1 to 21), Grant received (RAC or ASCB), College Acronyms and years of employment in NUI Galway. Oral style repetitions or vacillations were omitted. Sections of interviews not presented in the report are indicated by (...). When deemed necessary to facilitate understanding, additional information was included between brackets.

meaningful will actually happen. But, you know, under new leadership from the President as well, so perhaps things will improve in the future. But I think these grants are very important. They might just need a little bit of a review.” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“Actually, if such a grant had been available in the past, it would have changed a lot of the decisions I have made over the last few years (...) The only thing I would have to say that is in any way negative is that I wish it had been here years ago because I would have changed my family life considerably as well as my academic life.” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“I have two different experiences because I returned from maternity [leave for the first time] when the grant wasn’t available and I found that very hard because I came straight into teaching. I returned in December from my first maternity leave and then I was teaching in January, and I find it very tough because I had a big class, I haven’t taught it before, full teaching load, newborn baby, it was tough... Yes, it was very tough. So this was much better. Because I think when you come back from leave, the teaching you just do it because you are given your courses, but I think the research is harder because you are out of that mindset. So I find it really helpful. It gave me time to get back into research. I am quite busy since I returned as well, I am quite research active, probably more so than the first time.” (8: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, 11-15y)

“It helps you to get back into the game, and particularly the research game. And it is essential because I don’t think I realized how many disadvantages there were until I went on maternity leave. So it helps to give you some protected time to invest in research whereas you haven’t had the opportunity to invest in whatever period of time that you take off. And that is hugely valuable.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I had more time to focus on research (...) It makes coming back maybe a little bit less stressful because you have this grant and it can kind of get your research up again.” (11: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“It definitely has helped my career. Not only does it help your career, but it also helps diminish your stress levels. (...) So I think it is wonderful and I think that is why it was put in place. It does really change the way you go about organizing your resources when you come back and making up for the fact that you missed a couple of opportunities to apply for funding when you are on leave. And that is inevitable, you will.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“I just find it really positive. It was a really positive experience. It made the transition back to work much easier (...) I think it is a great initiative.” (9: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, 11-15y)

“The other people who had applied, I know they got it as well, so it just really kind of feels that if you have a plan and if you need support, you will be supported.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“It saved me. It made it possible for me to return to work. I think if I didn’t have the teaching buy out I would have to go on sick leave or unpaid leave because it would be impossible to manage the admin with the teaching at the moment. (...) So only because I have the teaching

buy out, I am able to cope with the administrative burdens and without that, I would have not been able to return to work this year.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

“I have been away at various events or just talking to colleagues (...) I haven’t heard of any other colleagues in any other universities having something similar, so I think it is great.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“Actually, if you looked at my CV, it is quite interesting: 2016 was a poor year, and that was the year I had my baby. And then it comes back up in 2017. Actually, definitely, if you would graph my CV, 2016 is a blip year, and then 17 and 18 it is significantly improved. So definitely the statistic will show that really obviously, actually. I will get you the number if you need them.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

The grant meant the increase in the medium number of my publications per year from two to six or eight. (7<sup>6</sup>: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“This grant really has allowed me to keep being active when I came back (...) I had more outputs this year than I had before I left if you see what I mean. Because things had accumulated, so it really helps you to kickstart.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“There was a very quick turnaround hearing back from the office that I had been awarded the grant so in that sense it was great (...) I liked it was quick and that generally people were supportive of whatever you wanted to do (...) I liked that it was kind of autonomous and that they weren’t saying you have to use it for certain thing, because it suited me to continue to do my teaching, and not to buy it out. Some people thought I was crazy not to buy out teaching, but I actually wanted to teach, so, you know, you need that flexibility because people have different circumstances when they are coming in and getting the grant.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“Really, how people use it is going to be different from one person to another, what they might find more useful really depends. So they need to use it in the way they think is the most helpful for them.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“The budget plan, initially, I was looking at buying myself out of teaching and instead I redirected it to the research assistant. And actually, I think that was the better outcome ultimately (...) So being able to use the money in that respect has allowed a lot of background work to be done, which has massively saved my own time then. So the flexibility I think was very helpful.” (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

“It is a dynamic thing and opportunities arise during that time period (...) So I guess it was that period of time when I could engage with these opportunities as well.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

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<sup>6</sup> Due to technological problems, the recording from Interview 7 was not audible. The quotations presented are based on written notes and because they were not verbatim report, inverted commas were suppressed.

“One of the things I really appreciated, I have to say, it is quite flexible. I had in mind to spend it on something specific and then other needs came about and I could actually do it thanks to it. For example, I published a paper in 2018, at the beginning of January, and I had to pay fees for that. And I hadn’t counted on that happening. So I had to pay for that. And I could, thanks to it.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“I think what is wonderful with this is that you have the flexibility to use it as your needs arise. And that is very important. But then, of course, you still should have a very clear plan, but to be able to deviate slightly from this plan is very important, I think.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

## **2.2 Quotes: Athena SWAN Mid-Career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant (ASCB)**

“I am very grateful to the award. I mean, anything is good to get and I am grateful for having it.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I am very pleased with the grant, thank you very much. Can I have another one?” (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

“It has helped me to consider, to make decisions on how to progress in the future.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“It has facilitated a lot of further publications. (...) I suppose it was a confidence booster. And as a result, I was willing to apply for other grants and see what was out there as a result of that, after that. And I would say that that definitely lead into the next stages. So it was after I got this grant that I applied for [another] project grant (...) So I would say that it has been the forerunner to three bigger grants that we have got in.” (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“It was slightly different from any other grant that I would have applied for. It was unique. It was a small amount of money, but it was unique in the sense that it wasn’t typical. The majority of the grants I would have applied for is a very dedicated project (...) on a specific research theme. This was kind of more cutting across a different area or level, in the sense that it was skills building, which is something that I had never applied to before. (...) I found it very very useful and it certainly added value to me and to my work. (...) I have been working in research for over twenty years and I have been doing quite well in it and I figured though to keep updating, to keep moving, that you could use different methods, use different analysis in a similar area, to give you something new. And that is what I did. And I found particularly from the manner in which I spent this particular grant, it has a multiplier effect. In the sense that my key goal was to equip myself and my team with some skills and it seems to have gone beyond.” (12: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“I had [more than one] maternity leave. And each time my conditions were worst, every time I went on maternity leave. So I was asked to do work and then when I came back I had more work and there was no consideration taken of the fact that I was on leave. And so finally, in the last two years the university has started to fix that for people now. But I am in the group who were treated very badly. With lots of others, I am not alone in that. (...) So I saw this grant very much as a token gesture. For the younger people now hopefully it will be better. And that is important, you know. (...) So for me giving somebody who has been treated like that, five thousand euros, it is good, you know, it is fine. But it doesn't make good what happened in those years. And having the returners grant now, having full cover for maternity leave, all those things are excellent, but that was what wasn't on place.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I appreciate what they are trying to do in providing funding for people who have taken leave to try and regain some of the ground that they would have lost because in this job if you take a break, there is a built of time again, to come back. (...) I think it is important for the university to recognise that, in general, [for] people who have taken leave, that it is a break. As human beings it does takes time to round back up and it can be compensated somehow with grants like this. It also encourages them to make plans for a future and that is very good. Because you might come back and just try to get back into the same old routine whereas if you have a grant like this it gives you the motivation to think about your future career.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“I know there was a lot of reluctance amongst people, because people are so angry. At the same time, I remember saying to a friend: apply for it, at least. (...) It is just a token gesture to try and make right some of the wrongs (...) I think it is more symbolic importance, I don't think it makes right all the things that the university has done wrong. I think it is a token gesture and it is really small, considering the amount of women whose careers were affected by the way the university was managed for ten years. Putting, I don't know, fifty thousand, is that it?, I think about ten people got it in the first year that I did, and some of that money came from the college and not from the office of the Vice-President. So fifty thousand in the amount of women both below the bar and above the bar whose careers have stalled, a lot of the time because of caring leave taken, you know, it is very small. It is positive. And I think it works well for the university to be able to say, look, we are doing this for the mid-career people, you know. But it is not much.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I think with the new system, I think with Anne Scott's office, I think with the new president, people are beginning to gain the trust in the system again. And I think that that sends out an important message. So I think it is a hugely important grant. (...) A lot of the equality initiatives that are happening are happening to address issues as they go through, so for example now we realise that maternity impacts upon women so we have the Returners Grant, but there is very little being done to target the cohort that are beyond child, that have had their kid. (...) That group of women are the group that actually were writing the cold face of the discrimination that happened in this institution. So, if you think of the 2008-9 [Promotion to Senior Lecturer] round, they were that cohort. So I think it is really important that a message

is sent to them that we haven't forgotten you. And that a message is sent to that group of women, and I know it is not exclusive to women, but it is primarily women who get this grant, but that the idea being that we recognize that you didn't get treated as fairly as you should have been and so, therefore, we are doing something. And I think that that is a hugely important message if nothing else." (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

### **3. Application process**

Many respondents first heard about the grant schemes through institutional communication such as E-mail (48%). The need for more publicity was expressed, especially about the ASCB grant.

Both application processes were generally considered straightforward. The majority of respondents declared to have had support to complete the application (62%) and also to have had autonomy to develop the work-plan (90%).

Doubts surfaced concerning signature requirements, how detailed the budget should be, and what the grant could be used for apart from buying-out teaching. Some awardees recommended the information available to the application process could include examples of diverse successful former applications.

Many ASCB awardees mentioned the inconvenience of the period stipulated to the application process, that was considered insufficient and inadequately timed because it occurred during the Summer. The need to provide hard-copy of the application form was also questioned.

A respondent stressed the need to update the application form and mentioned it would be appropriate to access it in Word-format and not exclusively in PDF. Another demanded to have application forms tailored to humanities, arguing they are usually better suited to science research requirements. One awardee suggested NUI Galway could standardize the different application forms across the university or even create a database to store information previously provided by lecturers to avoid overburden applicants.

Information about the grant schemes was obtained from the following sources:

- 10 (48%) E-mail
- 6 (28%) colleagues
- 5 (24%) someone in a leadership position (Dean, Head of School or Vice-President)

5 (24%)<sup>7</sup> involvement in equality and diversity activities (committees or reports)

Support to complete the application

13 (62%) declared to have had support

8 (38%) declared not to have had support

Autonomy to develop work-plan

19 (90%) declared to have had autonomy

2 (10%) declared to have had partial autonomy

### 3.1 Quotes: Publicity

“I am not sure about the publicity of it. I remember trying to negotiate the website to find the forms, so that wasn’t that straightforward.” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“It is not a critique about the grant scheme at all, I think it is more a critique about us as a university that we need to take more seriously initiatives like this. It is just like everything else and I don’t know how you get past this, but people who are interested in knowing will know. They will always know what is going on. They will always know what is next on the line with the Athena SWAN Award. But how do you infiltrate a wider community of awareness? I am not quite sure. (...) You know the people who are aware of the scheme are the people who are aware of everything to do with gender issues or everything to do with initiatives coming from Anne’s office or stuff like that, but there is a body of people who are not aware and should be.” (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

“The more it is publicised, I suppose, people will be looking out for it then and maybe planning, if they knew they are going on maternity [leave], there is a Returners Grant. But they could also think, well, will I use that for now and then I will try and do this and then maybe in some other year time I will be able to apply for the other one.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“But I suppose not a lot of people know about it [the ASCB grant], because of the fact that when you read that email, it specifically states the criteria, those people that have had certain numbers of weeks leave and also are at that level, above the bar. So straightaway people would just delete it. So I suppose it was a little bit more flexible, then maybe more people would realize this is what is going on and that people in the university are recognizing that we do need something to try and help our careers and we have the foundations laid maybe to bring us to another level.” (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“I heard about the scheme when I was pregnant (...). I think I just heard about it when I was looking online. And then I didn’t think it was still running, I didn’t know whether it was still running. (...) Maybe even knowing about it clearly enough and in enough time, because I

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<sup>7</sup> Percentages greater than 100% because more than one answer per interview was considered valid.

would have found it difficult to do while I was on maternity leave as well because I was doing other grant proposals and reviewing PhD thesis and all kinds of things. But, if I had known ahead of time, it would have maybe fitted better than when I came back.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

Consider planning in advance and using the grant to extend the contract of people who covered the teaching during maternity leave, so that the workload and cost of hiring someone else could be saved. (7: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

### 3.2 Quotes: Application form

“The questions were reasonable in terms of asking what I planned to do.” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“I just thought that it was good because you know the decision will be made by somebody which is not in your exact field of research. (...) So it forces you to write in quite simple fashion and I think that is very positive. (...) I thought it was very fit for purpose.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“The application form, it is a minor suggestion, but it is only available on PDF, or was at the time, so then you need to recreate the same in a word, so that is a little bit tedious. (...) I don’t know if they changed it since.” (11: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“The only thing I remember at the time, I am not sure if it is changed, is I don’t think they required a budget at the time. I think that came after I got approved, then you had to say. I can double check that now, but that is my memory, that you put in more your academic proposal, I suppose, without the breakdown of the budget, which kind of came later. Whereas it just might be more efficient just do the two together, to be honest, from a practical point of view. But that is just a small thing.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“Like anything else when you are trying to juggle work and a small child, it is hard to find the time, especially with a discipline that is very small and very busy, to sit and write the grant proposal. I was writing other grant proposals at the same time, so to write another with a work plan and all the rest of it. Is time-consuming enough.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“The [application] form, you know, I remember having to put it all the publication things again. That is the same stuff in every form, it feels like as a member of academic staff you fill in that information multiple times a year for everything that you apply for and for everything that you have to report on. It would be really nice if that information was just stored somewhere. And also, even though it is the same information, the form might have things in a slightly different order or have the years done in different ways. So you have to re-do it every time, even though it is the same information. You can’t even just copy and paste from your own stuff. So it would be very nice if the university would standardize, to the extent that it is possible, I understand if there was a different purpose for different things, it may not

always be possible to standardize, but in so far as possible. If similar information is being asked from the same people multiple times so that they would standardize the form and maybe store it with the permission of the person, if possible. It is just that these things are supposed to be supports, so you don't want to be creating barriers in the application forms either." (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

"Because it was the first time that I was applying, some of the parts were not fully clear to me how to fill it, how much detail I was meant to give and this kind of thing. (...) It was not clear to me the amount of information that I needed to provide, I wasn't sure if I had to provide a full budget or just a general idea. It was not clear to me, I remember that." (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

"In terms of the scope of what was possible or what would be allowed, I wasn't sure. (...) Is it to buy out teaching, is it a tangible event? (...) Maybe more examples about what could be funded, examples of some things that have been funded might be helpful. (...) Especially in the humanities, sometimes it's difficult to conceptualize besides the most kind of traditional travel and so on." (1: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

"I think it would be useful to have more clarity on paper. Or more advice from someone to tell you: look, if this is to establish your independent research career, use this grant to buy yourself out of everything, insofar as possible, and just go and do this piece of research. If that is what is going to benefit you more. Rather than leaving it up to the individual to try and figure out." (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

"I feel with a lot of applications they are more suitable to sciences than humanities. (...) I find in general, in grant applications in general, not just for the Vice-President [for Equality and Diversity], they want to see maybe datasets or graphs or... they want the cost for materials that you would use in a lab, whereas in the humanities the money is on people, people's time thinking and researching and writing and being able to students to access you, so you can explain concepts to them in a conversation, which is much more effective than explaining a concept to them over e-mail. So maybe a greater awareness in general that with humanities the main cost is people's time and not necessarily laboratory equipment." (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

"It looks like an old [application] form that has been redone, so I think there would be no harm to maybe look at a form that is specific to the grant. (...) It was obviously cut and paste, so they cut and pasted from the wrong years, so they were asking of you previous experiences for years, but they were asking for the wrong years. The form hadn't been updated appropriately, so I just think, maybe look at the form before you send it out." (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

"The form was very unclear. (...) I remember I had to ask different people what does this mean, it wasn't something very obvious." (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

"If someone approves it and is also evaluating it, there was a bit of ambiguity about that. Could you approach the person? 'I support this application' was [to be signed by] the Head of

School. And then 'I support the award' [was to be signed by] the Vice-Dean for Research. So then actually he doesn't need to sign it, if he is the one awarding it. But that wasn't clear. And then 'I approve the award': so who signs that? But this is part of the application that you have to send in." (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

### **3.3 Quotes: Support, autonomy, and time-frame to application**

"It felt like a very supportive process right from my Head of School through to the Vice President and the Dean, all of the people who have had to review and support it and approve it did so very quickly and in a very supportive manner, so that was all very positive." (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

"I felt the application form was really straightforward, the need for six months plan is obviously very important, budgetary breakdown and so on. I thought the response from Anne was very fast once everything was submitted, so it was actually very easy and streamlined process." (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

"I don't think the process is onerous in terms of applying to it and I was very happy with it." (9: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, 11-15y)

"Any small queries I had were very small and were answered very quickly and very promptly. So if you can say an application process is painless, that was very straightforward." (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

"The simplicity of it is great. (...) Normally when you have a grant application and you look at it, you know yourself that before you even fill out the application form, the percentage of people who are going to be successful is quite low in the grant. Whereas when you read this application, Ok! There aren't a huge number of people in the university that can apply to this grant, so I might have a good chance. So you are already feeling positive about it. And when you get the application form, it is only a certain number of boxes to fill out and the CV is quite brief, so there isn't a huge amount involved in filling up the application form. So I would recommend anyone that can apply to do it because it is a quite simple process, it is not going to be time-consuming and it is a good thing to do." (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

"I guess the first year the time frame for the application was very short. Because I think it was advertised quite shortly and then the deadline was very soon after and so I gave it my best shot. I think it was also during the summer so there wasn't a lot of people around." (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

"I mean, just from my point of view, having had more time to prepare for it would have been good. But I think that is just because it was the first year and they wanted to get it out as quickly as possible. But maybe in terms of advertising it, maybe given people time, a month notice to prepare. Or maybe more." (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“It was an awful time in the year. They did it in August and we had two weeks to do it. Well, most people have families. It was the first year, they had the money and they wanted to do it quickly. (...) A big rush in August, that was the last week in August, which if you have a family it is usually busy. You had to have a hard copy, I don’t know why you need to have a hard copy as well. Then you had to do it by internal, so I had to come in specially from holidays to give the application a printed version of it. And then all this rush, and then we heard nothing, we didn’t even hear about it until months later. So the grant was supposed to start on the first of October but we didn’t found out until much later, so it was very hard to plan. (...) It seemed to be too many layers of approval from all the different people. (...) And then, you know, it is August, nobody is here.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

#### 4. Grant use

Awardees from both RAC and ASCB rated the grant as very important. In a progressive scale, 8 to 10 was selected by 65% to value the importance of the grant to their research development and 45% to their networking development.

Some respondents expressed the need to increase the grants’ budget. ASCB awardees stressed the convenience of coupling the grant with Sabbatical leave.

Many awardees chose to buy-out their teaching load to dedicate time to research. However, this option was not always possible nor preferred. Awardees mentioned hardships in relying on precarious work in terms of recruiting suitable candidates, agreeing on a fair remuneration since pastoring and caring requirements are not standardized or guaranteeing the adequate fulfilment of the academic tasks.

Other uses for the grants were reported. The stipend was also employed to hire research assistants, finance upskilling, produce preliminary data, fund open access articles, organize events, attend conferences, and sponsor research expeditions.

71% of respondents completed the proposed work plan to a great extent<sup>8</sup>.

Part of the respondents affirmed additional responsibilities were bestowed upon them after receiving the grant, therefore, constraining their time to do research. Misinformation by managers was reported. Clarity on the rationale and purpose guiding the implementation of the grants among people in senior positions was probed.

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<sup>8</sup> Some respondents had received the grant recently and were, therefore, initiating the work-plan.

Mixed views were professed in relation to reporting, which might indicate a lack of standardization across schools. Some respondents declared the reporting process was straightforward and not overwhelming. Others were confused about the procedure. One awardee expressed discomfort and potential unintended consequences in reporting orally to colleagues in the school.

Some respondents declared they regretted certain budgetary decisions after learning about other awardees intentions. The ASCB grant launch was mentioned twice as a relevant space to share information.

Suggestions offered by respondents indicated the demand for more information available upfront about the different ways the grant can be used, as well as a want for facilitated connections and flow of information with previous awardees, maybe coupling the grants with a mentoring scheme.

Respondents rated the grant scheme in terms of its important to their Research development (0 being not important at all and 10 being very important)

<b>Progressive scale</b>	<b>RAC</b>	<b>ASCB</b>	<b>Total</b>
>5	0	2	2 (10%)
5-7	1	3	4 (20%)
8-9	6	2	8 (40%)
10	5	1	6 (25%)
Did not answer	1	0	1 (5%)

Respondents rated the grant scheme in terms of its important to their Networking development (0 being not important at all and 10 being very important)

<b>Progressive scale</b>	<b>RAC</b>	<b>ASCB</b>	<b>Total</b>
>5	2	3	5 (25%)
5-7	5	0	6 (30%)
8-9	3	4	6 (30%)
10	2	1	3 (15%)
Did not answer	1	0	1 (5%)

Respondents declared they completed their workplan

<b>Response options</b>	<b>RAC</b>	<b>ASCB</b>	<b>Total</b>
Not at all	0	0	0
Very little	1	0	1 (5%)
Somewhat	2	1	4 (19%)
To a great extent	9	7	15 (71%)
Did not answer	1	0	1 (5%)

## 4.1 Quotes: Grant use

“It definitely responded to my needs. I used to arrange teaching cover. (...) So the important thing to me was the hours, the hours in the day to spend catching up on research.” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“I was able to create an incredibly unique opportunity for my research and for upskilling that I don’t think that I would have been able to be funded to do under any other kind of scheme (...) It is a hugely important moment in the development of the next phase of my research career. So I feel almost guilty for having been able to take advantage of it because it has been such a brilliant opportunity (...) I haven’t actually realized it was all going to happen so fast.” (1: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

“I am already at a [senior] level, so I wouldn’t say it was necessarily [research] development. But it meant that I could immediately engage with research again on my return from maternity leave, instead of having a leading period to be able to undertake that work. So it was very important in terms of, I suppose, minimizing time lost out of research.” (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

“Without this funding, it would be very difficult for me to apply for next funding because the way the scientific system works right now, every time that I apply for something, they want to see some preliminary data. Without preliminary data is almost impossible to get the next funding. (...) This grant is providing me the support to be able to produce that preliminary data to be in a situation to apply again. So it is very very important.” (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

“I was given additional responsibilities that I haven’t anticipated. And that kind of ate into my time a bit more than it should have. It is hard to be gifted something as great as this and then not feel that you own your institution something as well. So, being asked to chair a committee or do something, it would have been selfish of me, I think, to say no to those things just because I had this [grant].” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“I did actually take over new responsibilities. (...) there were various other committees around the university that I have been asked to join. And I kind of felt I had to. (...) In one way I felt I have this extra time so I don’t have much of a rationale to say ‘no’. And now that sort of stuff is eating up my time. And maybe this is a real gendered thing, maybe men would be just, like: ‘No’. (...) Women are less able to say ‘no’, particularly to pastoring and caring roles, and committees about all sorts of things. So, I think some guidance from above would be useful. (...) If this grant is meant to help you in that regard, the time for that grant has to be steely ringed fenced. Because otherwise the boundaries are blurring and the time gets eaten up. And maybe it is up to the individual to be stricter. But if so we need to be told that. It needs to say it in the guidelines: you need to create your own boundaries and you have the authority to say to your Head of School that I am saying no to everything. Because the problem at the moment is this confusion about what does this means.” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I knew what areas I wanted to work on, it facilitated me to go to conferences to progress that. The ideas didn’t change, but it did deepen the learning.” (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“When you are an early career researcher as I am and when you also are a caregiver, I think the opportunity to have a space to travel for an academic reason, to meet other people within your space of research, that can be challenging. So this gave me the opportunity on time that I had allocated to work as opposed to my personal time to be able to travel for work if that makes sense. Because a lot of travel I do within a part-time role, a lot of the research activity I do in my part-time role is actually outside of my hours. So it gave me space to formally collaborate in a way that I was not able to prior to that.” (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

“As a woman with caring responsibilities and, in my case, as a woman with caring responsibilities who is working part-time, very often it is just about maintaining your place in the research context. So that you don’t become invisible to colleagues. I think that was really important for me, how I really thought about this grant, that it was an opportunity to reassert my visibility. I wasn’t going to receive funding for a massive grant, but it was actually about just: I am still here, I am still doing research, I might not be as productive as I was prior to children, but I am actually still productive and what I am doing still has academic merit. (...) So the main purpose of the grant was to enable re-engaging with my research network. (...) Because part of what happens, particularly in the context of being part-time and having caring responsibilities, you are time poor. And if you are time poor and resource-poor, it is difficult to attend those conferences and to make those face-to-face connections that are actually still very important.” (13: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I suppose I am relatively old to get the grant. There was an award lunch and I met some of the other people who had received the grant and it would have been more useful to me sooner. It is a Career Capacity Building, so it would have been more useful maybe sooner after I had my children and at this stage life has settled down a good a bit, things are steady state, for now at least. So I am progressing anyway. This was an opportunity for me to fill in blanks in research that had been ongoing while I was on maternity leave and when my children were younger and free time to research wasn’t as available. (...) I have been able to get back to my research to a level where I am relatively happy with the time available to spend on research. So this was to fill in blanks that I don’t have funding to do it otherwise, but it is to allow work that has been done while I was very busy with everything. It gave me an extra resource to focus on that.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“I think it was the right thing at the right time. Timing was important.” (12: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“If I hadn’t got this grant, my sabbatical leave would have been more limited.” (...) If I haven’t had sabbatical leave, if it was just this grant, I think it would have been harder.” (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“The one thing that I am conscious of is that [the grant] was particularly beneficial because it was a sabbatical year. It is trying to align perhaps the monetary resources with time resources. (...) So it was the balance between having actual time resources and then the monetary resources. That they were actually both available at the same time. It was very beneficial and I really feel that it made my sabbatical particularly productive. (...) I would probably encourage other individuals to be very strategic about either when they apply or, if they are successful in getting the grant, possibly deferring it until they have time to use it. Because it is not a particularly large grant, so you have to use it in a very specific way. (...) Having that pot of money in a time period when I was free to use it that made all the difference. If I had it now, it would be much less useful to me, because I would be so confined and constrained by other work commitments. So that idea of kind of encouraging individuals that are thinking about applying for it, to be very strategic about when they do apply for it. And not only applying to the sake of getting to a pot of money. For it to be of value, it has to be very specific and linked to a work plan, I think.” (13: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

## 4.2 Quotes: Institutional issues

“The first time when I came back from maternity leave and I asked about it, I was told by my old Head of School that I wasn’t eligible. And I couldn’t understand that. So we subsequently got a new Head of School and I asked him and he said: ‘Oh, no, you are’. But then I thought it might be too late because I was already back for a year. But he said: ‘No, we will make a case’. So that was really supportive and encouraging.” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“The first time I applied for the grant I contacted somebody I know in another School who had gotten it and I kind of just followed what she did, because she didn’t know either. (...) What the person is allowed to do and not allowed need to be communicated to do to all concerned. It can be just a three liner to the Head of School that if somebody is on this grant, that means they can absent themselves from everything. Or they can’t. They can absent themselves from this but not that. Just some guidance. Because if it is left, if it is left to be decided by whomever whenever, I guarantee you most women will end up doing all of the work as well as the grant. Or doing some of it, or feeling that they can’t say no. Because it’s a gendered thing. Or feeling under pressure that they should do a bit of everything or do it all. So I think absolute clarity is important, really important in a gendered way on this (...) Clear instructions to Heads of School, to the applicants, to everyone that, if this is to establish your independent research career, you should use this money for complete buy out, if that is what the person wants to.” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I think the grant it goes someway but it doesn’t go way enough.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“I think it [the grant scheme] is very restrictive. (...) It even restricted some people who would have taken parental leave, so some males in the university may also want to be eligible for

this. But as well it is just for lecturers above the bar, and that seems quite unfair too. It should be all lecturers, so why not senior and below the bar? I can understand they are trying to not let senior lecturers apply because they established their research and they met the criteria to apply for senior, but a lot of lecturers below the bar are at that stage for a long time and they would really benefit from something like this, to get their research off the ground even more, and then to get above the bar.” (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“[Q: Do you have any other critiques or suggestions about the grant scheme?] Increase it. (laughs) [Q: Increase the amount? Or increase the number of people? Or both?] Both, yes. I don’t know how many people did apply for it. But I know there are lots of colleagues here in the corridor who were on leave for various things and they didn’t apply.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“After meeting with other people who had won the grant, from different disciplines, I got some ideas of how else you could spend it, like by going to conferences or have a training course, which was interesting. (...) Because the timing of the application, that time was very very short, and it was in the middle of the previous summer and I was thinking, ok, if I got money now I could hire someone. But obviously you need time to advertise and to inquire and what not, so at the time that sounded like the best way to do it. If I had more time to prepare, if I knew this was an annual thing, then, yes, I would have targeted it. The other topic was to help me to move into a new research topic. And I would still like to do that. I would probably put all of the money towards trying to move to a new research topic, either to training of myself or hiring maybe not an undergraduate student, but hiring someone at a higher level.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“Publications are so expensive. When you submit an article for publication, to get the open access, the publisher wants you to pay a fee. So it is quite expensive and some of the people I met at the [ASCB] launch, that I would know from other disciplines, they were using that money in that way. And I wish I had thought of that at the time (...) I just didn’t actually fully comprehend the amount of money involved. So I wish I had asked for that, that some of the money be kept apart for that.” (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“But there are lots of things that I couldn’t address by this grant. I still have a teaching load and so forth. Quite a teaching load, I should say. It is not that I could get buy out for my teaching, anyway. In terms of the money, yes, but to have people around that would be able to do it, they wouldn’t come just one lecture or so basis. So that doesn’t address that.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“So I had to justify where the money would be spent and mentioning the teaching wasn’t enough so you had to explain that for every one hour you teach you might do three or four hours preparation of materials. Then after the hour you teach, there might be another two hours of communication with students. And then for every course, there might be ten hours or twenty hours of assessment. So I had to find a way to explain the teaching of humanities subjects on the form in sufficient detail to justify the grant. (...) I had to redraft the application.

(...) Because when you hire people in part-time you have to pay for every hour. It is not like, here is your salary and here is your work and you must do it all.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

“I had bought out some of my teachings to allow myself to do research, but that didn’t work out. I had to step back into the teaching because the person didn’t work out. (...) She found it too hard, too difficult and too stressful, her exact words, and too much work. And she had one-third of my teaching (...) I think I wouldn’t try and rely on precarious work. (...) I suppose you realise that getting somebody to step into a university course, it isn’t as easy.” (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

### **4.3 Quotes: Budget**

“I have to say that I was between using the money to cover the lab, as a main source of funding during these months, to cover all expenses from the lab, or to use the money to hire someone. But I couldn’t use it for both things. I know I am asking for a lot (...) I am really glad that I have this funding, but it is not enough to cover the two things. I have to say.” (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

“More money.” (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

“I know 10 thousand is generous, but it is not something which has a major impact on your research either, because you can’t do much with it. I am not complaining at all, I think it is great to have it, but for that to have a major impact it needed to be more. (...) I think the amount is generous, but you can’t do research with the grant itself. It only facilitates doing the research. But overall I think it is a very good scheme.” (11: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“I could do with having a bit more. But unfortunately, it is only a drop in the ocean for the project I am using it for. (...) I mean, it has been helpful, certainly. (...) In the long scheme of things it is very small.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“My experience of having other university grants is that the research accounts office routinely seems to take 10% away from your grant. So the amount I applied for was not the five thousand, I adjusted it down by 10% because I figured I was going to lose 10% anyway. And I think that is possibly something they might want to be aware of in awarding the grant, that the research accounts office is going to take 10% off.” (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

### **4.4 Quotes: Reporting**

“It was very user-friendly. One of the things I was surprised about is the lack of requirement for constant reports to be submitted. (...) I was refreshing to have the grant be given and the assumption being that the academics would actually use the grant to do their work. Because I have gotten European grants in the past and the administrative burden is very onerous and

very often can take perhaps a week out of every four months, which if you are also juggling caring activities and teaching responsibilities, administrative responsibilities within the context of the college, you end up doing more administration than research.” (13: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I know at the stage I put in the application there was some requirement that I report back at some stage, I am not very clear on what the reporting requirements are. (...) Maybe that could be clearer in the application form.” (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

“There was a condition that you needed to or should present your output and activities to your school. And, I have to say, that was the only thing that didn’t sit comfortably with me. You don’t have to do that when you are on sabbatical, and sabbatical is a full year when you get to focus on your research, whereas this was a grant that allowed me to buy out my teaching so I could find more time to do research, but it is nothing like sabbatical, it was a much shorter period, and it wasn’t like I was doing exclusively research, it was just that I was doing less teaching and I could do catch up on my research. Having to get up and present it in front of my colleagues, to me, I felt like it was making an example out of me and I just wasn’t comfortable with that. You don’t have to do that for a twelve-month sabbatical, which is a much more focused investment in research and why do you have to do it when you are coming back from maternity leave? For a shorter period of time, a much shorter period of time. I am sure the intention was good, but for me, there was a slight drawback that I was being made an example of (...) That was the part that I felt that wasn’t necessary and that I don’t know if it was fully fair. I am happy to do a written report, you have to have transparency when you are giving people money and know what they are doing with it. But in terms of being mandatory to present to your colleagues, to me, there could be unintended negative consequences from that. That I was being highlighted because I was a woman, had a baby, and was coming back and was telling about all the different things that I had done over the last six months.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

#### **4.5 Quotes: Suggestions**

“I know that they are now introducing things like the ramp up from maternity leave workshops and things like that. But actually for people who availed of the scheme to maybe meet with people who are just availing of the scheme, so maybe have a little bit of a network to look at how other people have successfully made use of the funding available to them.” (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

“More mentorship for staff would be good and this could be attached to a grant like this, where you apply for the grant but you maybe identify somebody who is going to act as a kind of mentor for you (...) It might be a nice attachment to a grant like this, where you would identify a mentor as part of the application process so that you could meet with that person

even for once after coming back from leave to say ‘this is my plan, what I intend to do, and I have had this gap now, do you think that is reasonable or achievable and what should I be aiming to do.’ (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“I think it would be important to have your clear plan over the kind of six months period so that you then try to do a track with anticipated outputs for it. And it is important that you do know what you are doing before you draw down the money for it.” (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

“I think we are quite shy, especially those of us who have had leaves to care for children are quite shy of putting ourselves out there and saying yes, it was a legitimate reason as to why I had to leave, but there are supports available for early career researchers (...) So I think my greatest form of advice to other colleagues would be: apply. If you are eligible, apply.” (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

“I would say to take time to think about it. And maybe take time to think what it is that you want to achieve. And then think of all the options you could use the money than to help you to get that goal. And maybe talk to other people who got the previous award, awardees.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

## **5. Comments on equality, diversity and inclusion**

Respondents commonly described the conflicts arising from being a carer and coping with the academic workload. Testimonies about working during maternity leave were common, mostly related to publishing deadlines and supervision. No one mentioned being summoned by superiors to perform academic tasks in NUI Galway.

Many respondents expressed the need for full cover for maternity leave and not only teaching cover. Two declared pending workload from the time they were on leave prevented them from dedicating time to research as envisioned by acquiring the RAC grant. The extension of maternity leave time was also raised by one respondent. Another mentioned the need to have full coverage to sick leave.

Further assistance for people returning from leave was required, including more provision to breastfeeding. Childcare provision was mentioned as a priority.

Respondents revealed frustration with the distribution of administrative tasks, declaring that was not done in a transparent way. Non-standardization of practices in different schools was questioned. Awardees suggested implementing an audit of administrative roles and their distribution.

The promotion schemes were raised as an issue of concern, as well as the need to expand policies to include male carers, early career researchers, people employed in precarious conditions, and professional staff.

The composition of committees was another issue mentioned. Whilst the gender balance policy was praised, one respondent mentioned the risk of overburdening lecturers in schools where gender imbalance is high. Respondents mentioned the growing internationalisation of staff and how that needs to be reflected in committee composition at all levels. The importance of adopting an intersectional approach to realise diversity and inclusion was highlighted.

Awardees remarked work-life balance as a broader social issue that encompasses the university, within which NUI Galway plays a significant role.

Most awardees stated they recognize transformations towards gender, diversity, and inclusion in NUI Galway and stressed the urgency to further embed the agenda in the university's culture. One respondent stated more research is required in order to produce evidence-based policies.

## **5.1 Quotes: Work-life balance**

“And I was thinking, until I had had my baby I am very able and I want to work as much as I can, and then when I came back I still want to have a career, because you work so hard for your career, that you don't want it to be... It changes, obviously, because now my baby is very important to me, but I still have this part of me that wants to do very well, you know, in research and academia in general. So I got interested in this equality, diversity, inclusion types of questions.” (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“Until my first baby came along, I did all of my research, all most all of my research, at nights, on weekends and in my holidays because it is so busy. And for most academic staff that is the reality, I know that. I am not saying 'poor me', but most people end up doing most of their research in their own time (...) But the issue is when you have kids that time is gone. When you are out of work and you are at home you are 100% engaged with your children and that is right, that is the way it should be. But there is a major disadvantage for your career there. (...) You can't let your teaching go, you can't let students support go, generally, or any of these things. So that what happens is, for most women, the thing that they can let go or they do let go is research. Because it can be let go. (...) So I don't really see it completely as a university issue, to be honest, it is a societal thing, isn't it? About the role of women, and how women are supported and also the role of men, the participation of men in family life.” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I spoke about how as a society we need to consider how to create the conditions in society that enable both men and women to work and progress (if they wish to do so). My worry is that gender equality in the workplace may often be viewed through an economic /business lens i.e. what proportion of woman are working; what proportion of woman are in senior roles; how much do women earn in comparison to men. I feel quality of life issues need to be given greater consideration. (...) In a competitive environment, like the University, many women particularly in dual career households are trying to do it all, but it can come at a cost (personal, health etc).” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y, E-mail contact after the interview)

“I think certainly us as women in the workplace we view our time spent on maternity leave or on follow up parental leave or in reducing our working hours to care for our children, we view that sometimes as just get on with it, it is just life. As opposed to seeing that actually, that time disadvantages me because perhaps I am not having the exposure or the experience that other colleagues are having. So I think sometimes we need to shake ourselves and say ‘No’, this is something that is very supportive and I am entitled to apply for it.” (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

“That is the nature of the job, unfortunately. Because you can never just completely walk away, because of the research side.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

E-mails sent during the evenings or the weekends are an intrusion of work in life-time and cannot be avoided. (7: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

## 5.2 Quotes: Maternity leave

“Well, number one, it is not actually that easy to take a complete break if you are researching because you have responsibilities as in you have students and what not. I know in theory we shouldn’t be at work if you are on leave, but you can’t just ignore people who are working under your supervision, entirely based on your expertise.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“It was very difficult to apply for anything during my maternity leave when I was taking care of my child. Although I applied but I couldn’t put all the time that I needed.” (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

“It is just not feasible when you have young children, a baby, you just don’t have the time. And I ended up having to [work], because there would be papers under review and stuff like that, so you end up having to do a bit.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“A journal editor doesn’t care that you are on maternity leave.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“The kind of job that we have it is impossible to close the door and not look or think about it for eight or nine months, and that is pressure on a mom, to be honest, when really you just want to focus on your kids, and you are trying to survive with very little sleep (...) So there is that pressure and I certainly felt it very difficult to not look or think about work or not engage in some way. (...) But one of the things that I learned is that it is not just that you are not

writing papers or you are not applying for grants while you are on maternity leave, for me one of the hardest things was actually the impact it had in some of my historical activities. (...) I lost, for example, lead authorship or senior authorship in historical activities. And that is just one example.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“When I was on maternity leave I tried to keep up with publications and do a bit of work, cutting short my maternity leave because the main concern I had wasn’t my teaching. If you are on leave, your teaching gets covered, but your research slows down. And that was always the biggest concern I had. (...) I have a lot of regrets about my maternity leave, I have regrets about coming back to work too soon, I have regrets about trying to work while I was on maternity leave and that was really one of the reasons I took parental leave. And certainly, those leaves may have been spent differently had I known that there was a way, if there had been a way to catch up afterward.” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“There is also another issue that is maternity leave. You are not covered, so my discipline wouldn’t have received enough money to replace me. The administrative work of my job just didn’t get done. (...) There was no one to cover me full-time (...) there was no one to replace me because the maternity payment to the discipline isn’t sufficient. So actually what I am doing now is my work that didn’t get done while I was on maternity leave. And that is essentially being funded by the Returners Grant. (...) It is purely just the quantity of the workload is that intensive. It is not a forty hour week, I would regularly work sixty hours a week. And so if I am gone, my other colleagues are also working sixty hours a week, it is not possible for them to also do my sixty hours. So a lot of the work didn’t get done. And so now I am spending my time fixing the mistakes so that the students from last year aren’t affected. And then, when that is ready, trying to focus on the students from this year. And so when you are trying to fix the mistakes from the past six months as well as focusing on demands of the moment, there is just no time left for research. But I cannot not do that for the students while I am here and they do have to take priority. Ethically, they do. (...) The grant is great. It is the maternity system that is the problem. So what the grant is doing is subsidising that lack of state or university support for maternity. (...) It needs to be careful that it isn’t subsidising a wider problem. There is a problem in that: people who go on maternity leave are not replaced, and so that work isn’t getting done so when they came back, they are then spending their time doing the work that didn’t get done rather than focusing on their research. So in that way, I would be nervous that the Returners Grant is helping out a state responsibility or a university responsibility. (...) I suppose I just didn’t realise how limiting maternity leave is. I thought because you get paid, there is no problem. But you are not getting replaced. So there is a huge problem for the discipline you are leaving. (...) And if you do get pregnant and go on maternity leave, your discipline really suffers. So it doesn’t feel like you can leave without feeling incredibly guilty or dread coming back because your work won’t have been done. So when you came back, you are not coming back to starting again, trying to manage the pressure of having a baby and being at work, your workload has increased. So there are just

fundamental structural issues around maternity leave that have to be addressed if the university is serious about gender equality and how that works.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

“I think there are issues with maternity leave full stop. Or care leave. It hardly replaces you. So, as an academic on maternity leave you have ten thousand euro that covers what you do for the time period that you are not there, so for the six months. And it doesn’t do that. It is not very fair because it puts pressure on the person to come back maybe slightly earlier because if you extend for two months, then your colleagues still are under stress, because they have to pick up pieces. It puts you under stress for that and it is the same with sick leave, actually. And you feel pressurised to come back, but also it is very very difficult to get somebody that is specialized enough to teach in your area for ad hoc lectures because that is all they pay for, they pay for a lecture here, a lecture there. If you have twenty lectures, they pay for those twenty lectures, that is what is covered. That is not enough. Because there is the caretaking of the students involved, there is also quite a lot of normal administrative duties, all the rest of it. But also even having somebody to come to do that, they are not going to do that for just ten thousand euro. I know UCD, for example, they pay the full salary for the time period. I know if somebody is sick you can’t put something in place, but if somebody is on maternity leave I would say there is enough time period. And the University of Glasgow (...) just advertised maternity leave replacement. So in other places, it is possible to replace somebody properly. (...) At the moment we have a technician on sick leave and he is replaced only a halftime. That suggests he is only doing half the job? That is not true! And who picks up the pieces? Everything always falls on the colleagues and that is really not fair. (...) I shouldn’t have to be replacing a full-time technician’s job while extending my working hours to do that. (...) If they are off for maternity leave or a carer leave or for sick leave, there should be a replacement. A full replacement for the period of time. I think as I have said, it puts people under enormous stress. Because, if you are sick, you can’t be worried about whether your lectures are being done, you can’t be worried about the impact it is having on your colleagues.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

“I suppose the other way that the university could promote gender equality, again related to maternity leave, is in encouraging the research bodies like IRC or EPA to provide for maternity leave in their scholarships. Because if a Ph.D. student goes on maternity leave, I don’t think they are entitled to anything while they are on leave, in terms of funding. I think the general guides at the moment from the university is that they should take leave of absence, but there is no funding to cover that. I think the university could possibly lobby bodies, like EPA and IRC, etc., to have these bodies write maternity leave into their grants, I think that would help a lot.” (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

“It is not just NUI Galway, for example, I got a research grant from the Irish Research Council and I had a maternity leave during the research grant and there was nothing, it just continued, the grant finished and there was no allowance back then in 2009 for somebody having a research grant and going on leave. It just continued and that was it.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“And another thing: the Triennial Grant. As an academic in the university you are entitled to 1,800 euro for three years for traveling to conferences and doing research abroad. And I, because when you are pregnant you can’t travel, and then when you are on leave you are not going to travel, I didn’t use mine. So then when I came back and I wanted to use it, the period had finished and the money is gone. So, there was no discussion about that, which I thought it was very unfair.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I do think there is a need for more support when people return from something like maternity leave. Certainly, from my experience, you come back, day one, and you are just expected to fit back into the workforce with very little mentorship or support around you. I do think there should be more support around returning to work after a period of time away from work. Sick leave is very similar as well, you kind of come back and you are just expected to get on with things. So I do think more support around areas like that would be important. And flexible working, particularly for people who have caring, caring roles outside of the university as well, would be very important.” (21: RAC, CMNHS, 5-10y)

“Something that I have been looking into before I came back was the support of breastfeeding. (...) In primary and secondary schools they have just brought in new guidelines extending breastfeeding breaks until your child is two. So, I was on looking to see if that has been extended to the third level yet. And it is in process, apparently. But I think, wouldn’t it be nice for NUIG to lead the way there?” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

### **5.3 Quotes: Flexible hours**

“I can only really reflect on my own experience here, going halftime with a job share, and how supported I was in that. I can’t actually quantify how important that was. (...) It meant so much and it made my working environment a very positive place and it allowed me than to reciprocate in ways for the department, for example, taking on the courses that nobody else really wanted. And I think that is really important, that the needs of working parents are actually taken into consideration and given as much consideration as they possibly can. Because I genuinely think that, had I not been supported at the time I asked to go halftime, the choice for me would have been to quit. There was no way that I could have actually cared a full-time load with the caring load I had. It just wasn’t, it wasn’t feasible. And it would be a shame for the institution to actually lose people because of a lack of flexibility in scheduling, for example. (...) I am realising myself, now that my children are slightly older, (...) that your brain power does return. The levels of exhaustion when you are coping with the very young children and the constant eye infections and... That flexibility that is needed is not required indefinitely. And so perhaps ensuring that people are supported over that period, make sure that they actually stay in the institution and if people feel that they work is being supported I think they are more inclined to work hard.” (13: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“And there is a lot of talk about flexibility, flexible working hour (...) I think that emphasis on flexibility needs to stay.” (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

“I find it really annoying and ridiculous all these things about taking unpaid leave. Who are these people who can afford to take unpaid leave? (...) How are you supposed to pay your mortgage and all of these things? Do you know what I mean? That is crazy! So, you know, unpaid leave is completely useless for having time with your family” (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“So I think really, long-term, they need to look into making maternity leave a year. Maybe it is not on full pay, like it is for six months, maybe it is on seventy percent or eighty percent of pay, but that would be much more realistic (...) Something like that would make it much more feasible.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

“There is a lot of pressure and stress on dual-career families with children. Childcare needs to be a greater priority (the cost is a key issue, the quality is a key issue due to significant underinvestment by our government and from a practical point of view – coping with sick kids when creche won’t take them is a source of stress and guilt for families with young kids). (...). Personally for myself I have not taken any parental leave due to concerns about the impact this will have on my promotion prospects. Getting promoted to Senior Lecturer is very difficult in this University and I feel while on the one hand I would love to work 4 days, on the other hand, I feel it would kill my chances of promotion. So for me, gender equality comes at a cost unless we can create the conditions for families & individuals to thrive, while remaining in the workplace (if they wish to do so).” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y, E-mail contact after the interview)

“I had to cry on the phone to the university creche to get my baby a place for when she is ten months old. And they wouldn’t confirm her until last week. I had her name down on the list when I was pregnant and it has taken almost a year to get that place confirmed. So there just isn’t enough material support for child care.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

## **5.4 Quotes: NUI Galway policies**

“I think it is really important to recognize the different needs of our cohort of academics or researchers across the university. And I think it is very important to value the role women play in our society and the role they play in relation to childbirth, in relation to caregiving and in order to the fact that whether we like it or not there is a disadvantage to being the person who is within that role, regardless of how personally fulfilling it is, there is an academic disadvantage, you are out of the work zone with gaps in your CV for longer periods of time. I think it is really important to value the role of everybody within our society and I think Athena SWAN, this grant and the work Anne Scott is doing is beginning to poke at that culture within the university.” (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

“I know there are lots of activities going on now, which is very good. There is nearly so much going on that it is difficult to keep track of all the different activities. (...) I think that all that they are doing is good, but it will take time to see which ones are having the most effect. I mean, I know the promotion schemes hold a can of worms, but again I know that they are making efforts on that to make it as fair and equal as possible.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“I think that is very important that the university is seen to support academics who may be struggling to maintain visibility. It is not the only thing that the university can do to enable that, but I think that just in terms of actually putting resources behind something like a Capacity Building Grant sends a very clear message that the University is trying to take on board the idea that equality of outcomes may demand different levels of resourcing for different groups of people. And I think that is very important, just in terms of equality more generally, that is not a matter of giving everybody a box that is the same height, but actually acknowledging the fact that there is merit in giving people an extra hand to get over perhaps what may be a bit of a humpy period when children are very small and research might slow down for a couple of years.” (13: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“I would say there is no option to go back to where we were (...) I think there is a lot of really good initiatives happening in NUI Galway at the moment and it is a great relief. It is a breath of fresh air.” (6: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“It is good to see that [NUIG] is taking on board new strategies, new behaviours. I think it is a long way to go by the time it will actually affect a lot of behaviours in the university. But of course, if it is lead, and genuinely lead by good people at the top, it has got some chance of infiltrating down. Because the culture of the university has to be reconsidered, I think. There are serious issues there.” (12: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“I think the maternity leave Returners Grant scheme is a very valuable addition. And also the fact that now if somebody like me takes leave, unpaid leave or parental leave, that my school can apply to have that money brought back into the school. This wasn't the case four or five years ago. Before, you would be going on leave and your colleagues would have to pick up the work, but now, in principle, somebody can use that money to do your teaching or whatever. I think more initiatives like that would be good.” (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

“I think NUI Galway has made a lot of advances.” (5: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“I know that this institution has been in the news a lot in terms of gender equality issues, however, my own experience since being here is that I never actually worked in a more family friendly and gender-conscious environment in my entire career. (...) It is a very supportive environment here [in NUIG] in terms of people looking out for each other and supporting each other in their applications.” (1: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

“I want to add something. I think the university is doing much better than three years ago (...) probably because of this Athena Swan award, because when they applied they didn't get it

(...) And people got to start thinking now that something has to change and it has improved a lot in that field, so that is really positive.” (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

“The university is going in the right direction. Hopefully. Listening to staff and understanding. I suppose the flashpoints are really the promotion schemes and looking at work-life balance, the demands. It has an action plan and most of the things there are quite good, so... A lot of it is just to change the culture, which is slow. But it is changing.” (15: ASCB, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“This thing about not having early morning or late afternoon meetings, I saw something about that. That is important. But the people would actually adhere to that? Will it actually be implemented? I have seen it on paper but there are still meetings that happen at eight and five. (...) Similarly, there should be no expectation about having to come in to open days on the weekends. It is not just losing time with your family, it is completely not family-friendly. But you are also, again, if your husband has different working hours, you are looking for a babysitter. So you are losing money, as well as losing time with your family.” (14, RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“For the university to be seen as treating people equally it does have to treat people equally. At the moment I don’t think that people are treated necessarily equally.” (19: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

#### **5.4.1 Quotes: Promotion schemes**

[Q: What actions in your opinion would be effective in delivering equality and diversity in NUI Galway?] “Radical change. And by that, I mean a radical overhaul of promotion systems and it is not enough to keep tinkering the system we have. We need to change things much more dramatically. And we can do that because we have seen the university’s commitment to radical change.” (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“I think it [leaves] should be automatically included and evaluated in terms of the numbers of publications you have. Because it goes on over years and then obviously if you have been on leave your publications are lower but it is not properly accounted within the university. A colleague of mine [in another institution] said she just adjusted it, to maternity leave. So I don’t think there are any hard rules for how to do it. I think that would be good.” (11: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, >4y)

“The disadvantage for women mothers in academia I think continues for some time. So maybe there could be, as part of the scheme, for promotion or something. I think when you apply for promotion (...) they give you some points or something if you have been on maternity leave, but I wonder just does that continue. I think it needs to be cumulative, it can’t be a one-off thing. Because it isn’t a one-off disadvantage, it is a cumulative disadvantaged. (...) Recognition that this issues for women are cumulative in their disadvantage, it is not a one-off thing that can be just fixed with a tick box, you know. Particularly when a woman has

children, this stuff affects their research and their promotion possibilities massively, continually, for a very long time (...) Some sort of formal procedure in the promotion that would recognize that fact, that this is a cumulative disadvantage that continuous. (...) I think the men are always afraid that, you know, these sort of measures will give points to women who don't deserve them or who will then decide 'Ah! I am not going to bother doing any research now and I will still get the points or still get the recognition'. But it is really not like that at all. Maybe I am over generalising but I am sure that if the men themselves had kids they would see that it is really not like that and that many of the women, and I am not saying all either, but many of the women, and certainly I am among them, really want to continue in their research careers but are feeling really constrained." (14: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

"I am at meetings across campus and one of the things that come across quite a lot from certain senior management is this sense of 'We need to control the promotion system, so we get to decide on who is good enough'. And it is like they are trying to act like gatekeepers. They need to stop seeing us as the enemy and start seeing us as their colleagues and actually realise that we are entitled to promotions the same way they were promoted. And they were promoted during a discriminatory regime that facilitated and benefited them. And they need to acknowledge that they are the beneficiaries of that. And I think that, to my mind, there needs to be a sufficient willingness to really challenge the systems we have and I don't think that there is. I think that they are tinkering, I don't think they are really going after the core cause." (16: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

"I have a lot of male colleagues who would be at the same stage as I am career-wise. They can't progress any further because so few people are promoted. I suppose grants like that would help them as well but they didn't qualify because they have never taken leave. (...) Certainly, yes, I would have been disadvantaged for taking leave, but I felt that they have been disadvantaged just because of the promotion scheme too. So it would be nice if they could avail of something." (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

#### **5.4.2 Quotes: Different staff profile**

"There has been a lot of emphasis on equality in the university over the last few years, particularly gender equality, but I think, again, more emphasis on other types of equality. I think there can be a lack of distinction between women who have a family, but also men who have family responsibilities. I work with colleagues who, even though they are male, are taking the primary care role within their families as well. So maybe it is less about gender and more around caring responsibilities outside of the home." (4: RAC, CMNHS, 11-15y)

"I have worked in other universities and lectures who start on a new position, they are given a reduced teaching load and reduced administration to support their research, whereas I fell in Galway new people come in and they have to do most of the teaching, more of the teaching

and more of the administration. And I think that is a bad policy. (...) Whereas I think, if you really want to support early career researchers, particularly women, particularly woman [who] are taking leave, I think there should be some kind of acknowledgment that when they start, they should be given at least less teaching or less admin, then people that have been here for longer. Because we have to develop our courses from scratch, you know, you are maybe in an early stage in terms of your research career as well so you need time to develop that. (...) I think there have been hugely positive steps, but I think there could be improvements.” (8: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, 11-15y)

“I am conscious that there is lots of people around the place who are on short-term contracts and going from one contract to another, university teachers or whatever they are called, and people on those contracts have a definite duration of teaching assistants. Actually, a lot of those are women that is why I bring it up. I think more support for that category of staff and the postdoc as well. They are in a very vulnerable situation career-wise because they are going from one contract to the next and their pension rights and all their rights are quite unclear (...) Because, for example, if a female postdoc takes maternity leave, it is often unclear how she comes back into the system again.” (9: ASCB, CoS, 16-20y)

“The moral of people in the university, you know for years how people have [been treated]. The moral has not been great. And I think this [the grant] has helped. But it has helped only a certain amount of people, so it would be great if it was across... Not just the lecturers, but I am sure the administrative people and the technical staff would also like in some way to have some ability to do something with their career, whether is a course or something. But then again, those people work 9 to 5 and they don't have the ability, the flexibility to take time off that maybe we would as lecturers, we can get sabbatical leave or during the summer when we aren't teaching. So it is more tricky and I can understand that. But I know it is lecturers who are getting the grant.” (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

### 5.4.3 Quotes: Administrative tasks

[Advice to other people applying for the grant] “To buy admin buy out, as well as teaching buy out, because it is the admin that is crippling. The teaching is contained, but the admin isn't contained.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

Mentioned the disadvantage of covering for colleagues when they are on leave and how that also mean an additional pressure that complicates research, especially when covering for administrative responsibilities. Suggest an extension of the grant to colleagues who pick up additional administrative workload, because they must be rewarded for their effort. (7: RAC, CASSCS, 11-15y)

“In a broader sense, I think what irritates me a little bit sometimes is that tasks are assigned in a manner that is not necessarily always transparent. People necessarily get asked to do

things, like administrative tasks, and I feel that is very on an ad hoc basis. To me what should be fair is that everybody in an academic role should, you know, list the people in the school and it should be very clear how people are chosen. I do feel as though in our school, the younger female is chosen to do roles... In my opinion is unfair. Maybe my perception is wrong, but I think there is no transparency in that process. I think the teaching is transparent. Certainly within my discipline, you can see what all the other colleagues are doing and there is a fair allocation in terms of numbers of hours. I feel on the contribution, administration side, I feel that that is not transparent at all. That really does need to be tackled, because I think if you feel like you are treated unfairly, your perceptions can negatively impact on your work performance. I feel there should be greater transparency in terms of how tasks are administered across the school.” (8: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, 11-15y)

“There is too much admin because we are short staffed. So the work plan was about research but I can’t get to the research because there are such administrative pressures that have to be taken care of, otherwise, the students will suffer. So my teaching has been bought out but in the general administrative management of the discipline, it is a huge burden getting the admin done. So that is interfering with starting the new research I had hoped to start. (...) [Other actions to deliver equality and diversity in NUI Galway?] Auditing administrative roles and the time spent on admin. So lectures are hired because of expertise in a research area, but most of their time is spent on admin, not research. And often the burden of that admin can fall to women.” (17: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

#### **5.4.4 Quotes: Committees composition**

“Just one thing that came to mind and that is related to that, with the interview board, the need for having 40% female internally in NUI Galway. I am sure it is the same in other disciplines where there are more women than men, but I get asked to sit in a lot of interview boards because there is a limited pool for that. (...) That can be problematic in some [ways], because, of course, it is good to have gender balance on the boards, but if it means that there is only a limited pool, it can make those people very busy.” (20: ASCB, CBPPL/CoEI, 16-20y)

“Diversity also reflected in the committees (...) Not only gender balance but everything. So people from different nationalities, for example, and people from different career levels, I mean, people that are just starting with senior people (...) I think that this university is very diverse but I am not sure that that is reflected in the committees.” (3: RAC, CoS, >4y)

“I think that we have diversity within the university in terms of people from different nationalities (...) that have come in to the university or moved from other countries to be here, so it is a really big issue and one that we can’t lose sight of because we are 17% non-Irish born in this population, a high percentage of our birth certificate to non-Irish national mothers and I think that is a good thing and that we need to be thinking about that as a

priority for how we imagine the university's role in the community in the years to come. (...) When we are talking about equality and diversity coming at it from an intersectional perspective, thinking about the gender but also the sexuality and migration and ethnicity, obviously there is still a long way to go in terms of a wider integration in the institution. But I guess I would be keen for us to be having the widest possible conversation about intersecting identities and how that relates to equality and diversity as goals. (...) I think in terms of race and ethnicity, particularly speaking as a scholar of migration and interculturalism in Ireland, it is a complete blind spot, it is considered not even relevant." (1: RAC, CASSCS, 5-10y)

"It seems to be that different schools have different rules, so I heard some woman that returned mid-semester wasn't required to do any teaching in that semester. And in the case of mine [school], I would have been required to teach if I haven't had the grant, so I think that is kind of... So I don't know but I got the impression some women don't have to teach the semester they return and can use it for the following semester." (8: RAC, CBPPL/CoEI, 11-15y)

"I can't speak for other schools, I have no idea what is going on in other schools and maybe it is just particular to the school where I am positioned, but I wonder if there needs to be more face to face interaction with the office of the Vice-President for Equality and Diversity. Because at the moment it is not an embedded concept within the daily everyday life, it is an office way down there that is doing something in relation to some award. Now, I know that won't be the case for every school because some schools would have signed up to do their own strategies and would have more explicit role to play within the development, but I think there are still some schools and some colleges around the university who are not fully playing ball and are offering lip service to what is going on. And I just wonder if there is a way for persons like Anne to have more interaction on the ground level. Would that in any way bring across a message on all levels of the university rather than just up here at strategic development? Which I am not sure. And it is not that there are not plenty of committees where people can, you know, join and offer their opinion. But again, I think that misses a cohort of people who need to hear and need to know and need to speak and need to start listening and then give voice. So it is a way of targeting participation in that." (18: ASCB, CMNHS, >4y)

"I know that there is a committee and that they are trying to make changes and that is a really good thing. (...) I know we have a bad name and NUI Galway aren't very good in terms of the number of lecturers that are female and are at a higher level, but it is the same, I think, in other universities too. Maybe just not to the same extent. But I think we could learn so much from, but I am sure this is going on, but I presume that we are learning from other universities, in what they are doing, so instead of trying to re-invent the wheel and come up with fresh ideas." (2: ASCB, CMNHS, 11-15y)

"You know, you can always look at the minorities and say, look, there is a problem. But you need to benchmark it against other things to really have a feeling for it. So, of course, there are not many women professors, we all know that. It is a very well-known fact, but it is starting

to really be tackled, I think. And schemes like that really help to make sure we don't really miss too much in our career when we go on leave. So I think there is great stuff that has being done, but there is a need, for me anyway, to understand the gaps and where actions need to be taken. I need data, I am a scientist." (10: RAC, CoS, 11-15y)

## 5. Conclusions

The Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers (RAC) was rated positively by its awardees. It was described as an important step towards equality, and a recognition of disadvantages faced by lecturers returning from maternity leave. Many respondents stated they felt supported by the university. The flexibility and promptitude of the grant scheme were particularly praised. Many beneficiaries reported an increase in productivity and some also expressed a reduction in stress levels.

Awardees of the Athena SWAN Mid-Career Lecturer Research Capacity Building Grant (ASCB) declared the grant is relevant and have positive outcomes. Most respondents valued the opportunity to plan their careers and to upskill. Lecturers interviewed stated the grant had resulted in more confidence and has had multiplier effects. The ASCB grant was considered relevant to mitigate former discrimination and rebuild trust in the system. But there was also a strong feeling that this was only a small step and much more needs to be done for those in mid-career who have been stalled by the legacy of inherent discrimination.

74% of all respondents considered the grant important or very important to their career goals.

100% declared they would recommend the grants to other colleagues.

81% rated highly (between 8 and 10 in a progressive 0 to 10 scale) the importance of the grants schemes to NUI Galway.

In terms of outputs, RAC resulted in 36 publications; 6 keynotes or invited talks; 14 events, and 17 other grant applications whilst ASCB supported 13 publications; 10 events, and 10 new grant applications.

Many respondents first heard about the grant schemes through institutional communication such as E-mail (48%). The need for more publicity was expressed, especially about the ASCB grant.

Both application processes were generally considered straightforward. The majority of respondents declared to have had support to complete the application (62%) and also to have had autonomy to develop the work-plan (90%).

Doubts surfaced concerning signature requirements, how detailed the budget should be, and what the grant could be used for apart from buying-out teaching. Some awardees recommended the information available to the application process could include examples of diverse successful former applications.

Many ASCB awardees mentioned the inconvenience of the period stipulated to the application process, that was considered insufficient and inadequately timed because it occurred during the Summer. The need to provide hard-copy of the application form was also questioned.

A respondent stressed the need to update the application form and mentioned it would be appropriate to access it in Word-format and not exclusively in PDF. Another demanded to have application forms tailored to humanities, arguing they are usually better suited to science research requirements. One awardee suggested NUI Galway could standardize the different application forms across the university or even create a database to store information previously provided by lecturers to avoid overburden applicants.

Awardees from both RAC and ASCB rated the grant as very important. In a progressive scale, 8 to 10 was selected by 65% to value the importance of the grant to their research development and 45% to their networking development.

Some respondents expressed the need to increase the grants' budget. ASCB awardees stressed the convenience of coupling the grant with Sabbatical leave.

Many awardees chose to buy-out their teaching load to dedicate time to research. However, this option was not always possible nor preferred. Awardees mentioned hardships in relying on precarious work in terms of recruiting suitable candidates, agreeing on a fair remuneration since pastoring and caring requirements are not standardized or guaranteeing the adequate fulfilment of the academic tasks.

Other uses for the grants were reported. The stipend was also employed to hire research assistants, finance upskilling, produce preliminary data, fund open access articles, organize events, attend conferences, and sponsor research expeditions.

71% of respondents completed the proposed work plan to a great extent<sup>9</sup>.

Part of the respondents affirmed additional responsibilities were bestowed upon them after receiving the grant, therefore, constraining their time to do research. Misinformation by managers was reported. Clarity on the rationale and purpose guiding the implementation of the grants among people in senior positions was probed.

Mixed views were professed in relation to reporting, which might indicate a lack of standardization across schools. Some respondents declared the reporting process was straightforward and not overwhelming. Others were confused about the procedure.

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<sup>9</sup> Some respondents had received the grant recently and were, therefore, initiating the work-plan.

One awardee expressed discomfort and potential unintended consequences in reporting orally to colleagues in the school.

Some respondents declared they regretted certain budgetary decisions after learning about other awardees intentions. The ASCB grant launch was mentioned twice as a relevant space to share information.

Suggestions offered by respondents indicated the demand for more information available upfront about the different ways the grant can be used, as well as a want for facilitated connections and flow of information with previous awardees, maybe coupling the grants with a mentoring scheme.

Respondents commonly described the conflicts arising from being a carer and coping with the academic workload. Testimonies about working during maternity leave were common, mostly related to publishing deadlines and supervision. No one mentioned being summoned by superiors to perform academic tasks in NUI Galway.

Many respondents expressed the need for full cover for maternity leave and not only teaching cover. Two declared pending workload from the time they were on leave prevented them from dedicating time to research as envisioned by acquiring the RAC grant. The extension of maternity leave time was also raised by one respondent. Another mentioned the need to have full coverage to sick leave.

Further assistance for people returning from leave was required, including more provision to support breastfeeding. Childcare provision was mentioned as a priority.

Respondents revealed frustration with the distribution of administrative tasks, declaring that was not done in a transparent way. Non-standardization of practices in different schools was questioned. Awardees suggested implementing an audit of administrative roles and their distribution.

The promotion schemes were raised as an issue of concern, as well as the need to expand policies to include male carers, early career researchers, people employed in precarious conditions, and professional staff.

The composition of committees was another issue mentioned. Whilst the gender balance policy was praised, one respondent mentioned the risk of overburdening lecturers in schools where gender imbalance is high. Respondents mentioned the growing internationalisation of staff and how that needs to be reflected in committee composition at all levels. The importance of adopting an intersectional approach to realise diversity and inclusion was highlighted.

Awardees remarked work-life balance as a broader social issue that encompasses the university, within which NUI Galway plays a significant role.

Most awardees stated they recognize transformations towards gender, diversity, and inclusion in NUI Galway and stressed the urgency to further embed the agenda in the university's culture. One respondent stated more research is required in order to produce evidence-based policies.

## **7. Recommendations**

- Maintenance of both grant schemes
- Expansion of ASCB Grant
- Application process
  - Increase publicity
  - Display examples of previous successful applications
  - Update application form and provide Word version for applicants
  - Avoid scheduling application process during Summer months
- Grant execution
  - Expand networking opportunities to applicants (such as launches and contact sharing)
  - Standardize reporting procedures across the university
  - Refrain bestowment of additional workload to awardees
- Award full cover to maternity leave
- Audit allocation of administrative task

## Annex 1: Questionnaire



OÉ Gaillimh  
NUI Galway

Office of the Vice President for Equality & Diversity

[Introductory message]

Thank you for your willingness to participate.

This project aims to monitor and evaluate the grant scheme and not your own personal results

Your name will **never** be mentioned, only your institutional affiliation (the school)

If you share any information that you feel can be sensitive and you prefer that I do not disclose your school, just say so

If you prefer not to answer any of the questions, it is not a problem

If you want to change any of the answers, you can contact me even after the interview is over

I will start with some demographic questions, and then go on to the specificity of the grant, and finally ask about equality and diversity in NUIG

But if any idea pop up into your head, you can interrupt me at any time – this is why we are recording



1. What about using the grant? Has it responded to your needs? What have you done with it?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you believe the grant helped your career? Has it made a difference to you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Considering your career goals, would you say the grant was:  
 Very Important  Important  Moderately Important  Slightly Important  Not Important
4. In a scale from 0 to 10 (0 being not important at all and 10 being very important), how important was the grant to your:  
Research development  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  
Networking development  0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
5. Did the grant result in any outputs or publications?  
Event / congress:  organizing;  participation;  presentation;  talk \_\_\_\_\_  
Publications:  Article commissioned;  Article published;  Book \_\_\_\_\_  
Application to other grants  \_\_\_\_\_  
Other production \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did you complete the work plan?  
 To a Great Extent  Somewhat  Very Little  Not at All
7. If there was anything that you might have done differently in applying and using the grant, what would it be? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Would you recommend the grant to other colleagues?  
 Yes  No. Why? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Have you availed to any leave before the grant scheme was introduced?  Yes  No
10. Have you have different experiences about carer leave (including what happened to other people or other institutions) that you deem relevant for your opinions?  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. If you were to rate the grant scheme in terms of its importance to the university, 0 being not important at all and 10 being very important:  
 0  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10
12. Do you have any other critiques or suggestions about the grant scheme?  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. What actions in your opinion will be effective in delivering equality and diversity in NUIG? Please add any further comments – for instance, about further steps that the institution could take to promote equality of opportunity, treat everyone with dignity and increasingly reflect society’s diversity?  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Would you like to have a copy of the audio file?  
 Yes  No
15. Is there any information you consider sensitive and prefer that I do not disclose?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Annex 2: Respondents' demographics and institutional affiliation

### Gender identity and sexual orientation

21 (100%) interviewees declared to be female, cis, and heterosexual

### Age

15 (71%) between 35-44 years old

6 (28%) between 45-54 years old

### Disability status

21 (100%) declared not to have a disability

### Nationality

16 (71%) Irish; from which one half-Irish

5 (24%) Non-Irish from other European countries

### Ethnicity

20 (95%) described as white, Caucasian or Irish,  
amongst those 1 also declared to be settled

1 (5%) described as European-mixed

### Language status

18 (86%) are Native English-speakers

3 (14%) are non-Native English-speakers

### Caring responsibilities

21 (100%) declared to have childcare responsibilities;  
from which 4 (20%) have additional caring responsibilities

### Contract with NUI Galway

21 (100%) permanently employed

### Working pattern

17 (81%) full-time

4 (19%) part time or other flexible working arrangement

### Years working in NUI Galway

4 (19%) 4 years or less

3 (14%) 5 to 10 years

10 (48%) 11 to 15 years

4 (19%) 16 to 20 years

### Grant received

13 (62%) Research Grant for Returning Academic Carers (RAC);  
from which 8 in 2017 and 6 in 2018

8 (38%) Athena Swan Research Capacity Building (ASCB) in 2017

### College affiliation

7 (32%) College of Arts, Social Sciences & Celtic Studies;  
from which 5 RAC and 2 ASCB

6 (28%) College of Business, Public Policy & Law and College of Engineering &  
Informatics;  
from which 3 RAC and 3 ASCB

4 (20%) College of Medicine, Nursing, & Health Sciences;  
from which 2 RAC and 2 ASCB

4 (20%) College of Science;  
from which 3 RAC and 1 ASCB